

Spouse Oral History Series

MARYANN MINUTILLO

Interviewed by: Monique Wong

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Q: This is Monique Wong on December 2nd, 1992. I'm interviewing Maryann Minutillo, Director of Family Liaison Office for the Foreign Service Spouse Oral History, Inc. We're at Mrs. Minutillo's office at the State Department at C Street, Washington, DC.

Maryann, I thought I [would] start right away with your involvement with FLO. Perhaps you can tell me how you first got involved in it?

MINUTILLO: I've been the director of the Family Liaison Office since 1988. I suppose my involvement with FLO was considerably earlier as a Foreign Service spouse, as a Foreign Service family member. My interest in the issues that FLO has worked on probably started at the time the office was really begun because I've always been a member of AAFSW, and I returned to Washington about the time that AAFSW was working on the concerns of Foreign Service families, which led to the establishment of the office.

Q: That would be between '76 to '78?

MINUTILLO: That's right. In 1976 I returned to Washington.

I met some members of the Association. I believe I was already a member of the Association, and I went to some meetings on the forum group. I was really very excited about the changes that were occurring in American society at that time, and some of the studies that were being done by AAFSW. So my association with the issues of that this office is involved in extends really from the very beginning of my involvement with the Foreign Service.

My direct association with FLO I suppose began officially, or professionally, when I became a CLO overseas in my last overseas post which was Paraguay.

Q: That would have been in 1982?

MINUTILLO: I was in Paraguay from 1982 to 1985, and I was the CLO for two years. I became, in effect, an overseas representative of this office, met the staff members here.

Q: Who were here at the time? Do you remember?

MINUTILLO: Oh, yes, certainly. The director of the office was then Marcia Curran, and I met here and I think everyone in the office when I came here for a debriefing, which is something that we still do, either incumbent CLOs or CLOs who are transiting Washington we ask to come in to meet the staff, and to give staff members an update on what's going on at their post. I came to Washington, I guess, summer vacation. I came into the FLO office and I met Marcia Curran, I met Phyllis Habib who was the support services officer at that time. I met Sue Parsons who later became the director, she was the deputy director then. I met the employment counselor, the educational counselor, and I was really very enthusiastic about that relationship between the field representatives, which I have come, and the home office.

Then I attended a community skills workshop at the overseas briefing center, and we were encouraged to take the OBC community skills workshop because it helped develop an awareness of the dynamics in the community, which of course was very useful for a CLO. So that was my first direct contact with the staff members in FLO.

Q: How many various areas were there at that time? That would be the beginning of the 1980's.

MINUTILLO: Probably when I came here and met people in 1983 or 1984. There was the director, deputy director. I don't remember if there was a CLO support office. I think probably not. At that time the deputy director kept up with the CLOs in the field. They didn't have as many as they do now. We had an educational counselor, employment - probably only one employment person, and maybe a support person as well. I know we didn't have a skills bank person because the skills bank was really in pretty early stages. It was not as consumerized as it is now. So the staff, although I think in the content areas was pretty much the same. It wasn't as fleshed out as it is now because we didn't have the volume of work at the time.

Q: And then you went back overseas to finish your tour.

MINUTILLO: Yes, I went back to Paraguay. I continued my work as CLO, and I went into a second year of CLO. One of the outstanding things during my time there in relation to this office was the opportunity to attend a CLO Regional Training Conference which was held in South America. And I really remember that very well. I remember meeting with people who had jobs like mine from Ecuador, and other places, Brazil, Chile. It was such a vitalizing, and energizing kind of conference that it has stayed with me in my role here, and in my commitment. That was one of the things I was really very committed to when I joined the staff here. We have continued support of the CLO program through very regular training. For me it was wonderful.

Q: You also went to Islamabad for the CLO conference recently. Perhaps you can compare the two CLO conferences for me? The first one you attended, and ...

MINUTILLO: ... and the one that I led, okay. That's really an interesting question. I've looked back a lot during the time I've been director, and have been working on CLO training here. What was most valuable for me as a CLO during that training that I attended. I've really tried to sort of dissect that and keep a sharp edge to what are we going to plan for the CLO? Because I think one of the things that happens here in Washington is that we get a Washington perspective. And if we don't really work hard at it, we lose the field perspective. And the Foreign Service is about being ...

Q: ... out there.

MINUTILLO: ... out there. It's about serving overseas, and it's the impact, I think, of living and working in this wide variety of places all over the world. That's what we in Washington have to be constantly aware. So I kept going back, and I still do that in preparation for these conferences. What makes it really worthwhile? I have to say that for me as a CLO meeting my colleagues, ensuring with them what was unique about ... I still feel unique about the job, but I found what was so unique, the things that I was feeling. About the strains of caring and concern you have as a CLO. Sometimes you get to feel, "I'm really the only one. I'm here doing this alone." Meeting your colleagues you realize that's not true. There are other people doing the same kinds of things, then added to that the linkage with the some office, with FLO Washington, and with the other resources that exist. That was very real to me, almost a gut reaction. I thought, "Oh this is great. I'm meeting all these wonderful people who are around me in South America, and I'm meeting this entire staff of people in Washington whom I can call on." I think that those two things, the linkage, the sort of horizontal linkage with CLO's and your colleagues in the field, and the linkages with the head office, the home office, are really vital. And in my work here I've tried to preserve those two aspects.

Q: Has the relationships between the home office and the CLOs out there changed in many ways?

MINUTILLO: Well, I think what we've done is we've built on, from the very beginning in this office, a foundation of support from the home office to the field offices. We're always changing, always improving, we're building, and we've done that, I think, because things have become so much more complex, very ... changes, demographic changes. There's so much more that is expected of a CLO in the field, partly because there's just a lot more accountability in everything that's done overseas.

In the early days of the CLO program with maybe just a few CLOs in 12, 15, 20 places, or even 50 places - for many places this was the first time there was a CLO - not have anything to compare it to. It was the most sought after job because it was a positive job, and obviously very interesting. One of the things that has changed, I think, in the last five to seven years is an increase in the opportunities for work whether it's on the local economy through bilateral work agreements that have increased, or because of the increased recognition of spouse employment within the embassy. We have more opportunity, so the CLOs position is not the only job available.

Q: But if you're one [(CLO) you attend] the country team meetings, however.

MINUTILLO: That's right. I still think it happens to be the best job in the embassy. I'm kind of biased on that. I really do. But what has changed I think is the expectation of the CLO to produce. Expectation on the part of management, the administrative officers, ambassadors, and DCMs, that had CLOs in other places and they want the person that's on the staff now to do everything that the previous one did, and maybe some more. There's more accountability through the office of Inspector Generals across the board. And there's been a specific addition in the CLO area in regard to crises, security, and evacuations. So what I have seen as an evolution of the CLO position, which means that our work here has also evolved. Our need to provide guidance, support, training, materials.

Q: What were some of the major issues? You might have already covered some of those at the Islamabad conference. That was in October?

MINUTILLO: In Islamabad what we did was we met with the CLOs from the South Asian regions, about ten CLOs. The major issues there, or the goals of the conference - it was only two days, so it was really very reduced, it wasn't a full meeting or conference - were to establish the linkages that I mentioned, and to help train the CLOs to focus on how to assess their community needs, and to establish the kind of program that would meet those needs. So, to that end we were looking at the area of CLO responsibility. And if you have a limited number of hours, if you're a CLO for 20 hours a week, you can't do everything for everyone. How do you set those kinds of limits? How do you prioritize so that you're really doing the best job that you can in a professional way.

Q: Given the amount of time that you have.

MINUTILLO: And the resources that you have, and the physical facilities, etc. We've used the term the CLO as the catalyst in the community as a kind of guiding, underlying principle; and the CLO as a professional. A kind of two-way thing. We even have cute little diagrams that we used the CLO as the bridge. Who do you work for is one of the questions we ask, if you're the CLO. And that's not an easy thing to answer.

Q: Who do the people think they're working for?

MINUTILLO: Well, you're working for the community network, but you're also working for, and with the administrative team, with the country team. And sometimes there's a conflict, isn't there? There's going to be some times when a regulation, or policy, or just a community issue that the community may be divided on. It could be something quite serious like the possibility of an evacuation, or a difference of opinion as to whether these people want to leave, or don't want to leave. But what's your role as the CLO? So we explore that and try to help the CLO recognize her role as a professional member of the team working on behalf of the community. But it plays out in some very interesting ways because to be effective, and to be a professional member of the federal government as we are, you have some responsibility and accountability. How do you bring to management some of the things they may not want to hear?

Q: Just for historical notes, whose idea was it to start CLO, the Community Liaison Officers overseas?

MINUTILLO: I think that it was part of the original recommendation. I do remember seeing the reports that came out of AAFSW which recommended the establishment of this office, but I know that at the same time that this office was begun there were 15 posts overseas that were established as part of a pilot project for a Community Liaison Office program. The term FLO and CLO, FLO is always the term used for this office, but I think at that time some of the offices in the field were also called FLO.

Q: How about going back to elaborate on what you said earlier about the Washington perspective? Can you enlighten me on that?

MINUTILLO: Well, you know its very amusing to sit here in Washington, in any job, not just in FLO, in any one of the bureaus, in any of the other foreign affairs agencies, and dictate what's to be done in the field offices, what should be done in a particular post, have expectations for reports, they minimize the importance of things because how important is it. People only get new lawn furniture once every [few] years. But living in an environment which is so different from living in the United States means that every single thing that we do, whether it's sending your child to school, or taking them to school, whether it's trying to get books because there isn't a lending library. All of those things have an impact, I think, on your daily life. And in Washington it's easy to forget that. In almost anything that you can mention.

Q: We take a lot of things for granted.

MINUTILLO: We take so much for granted. And even very minor things. Your child may like to ride a bicycle, and you bring a bicycle to post. But maybe you can't, maybe you're living in an apartment. We lived in an apartment in Argentina, for example, and I used to take my son to a park for him to ride his bicycle. But then the security situation changed, and because [we] were in a somewhat hostile environment as Americans, I couldn't do that. So even the geography, and the topography of a place may [not] allow you to do certain things because of security.

Q: Well, would they say the same thing about Washington, DC these days?

MINUTILLO: That's true, that really is true and I think a lot of people have mentioned that. One of the things that I keep in mind always is that I have a lot of choices to where I live. I am not by virtue of my work, and my profession, targeted in any way. When we're at an overseas post, one consideration may be that you are in housing which is predetermined, maybe on a compound, or you're in housing, which is selected by the Embassy. So you don't necessarily have those choices.

And security, by virtue of being an American in certain places where you are in a threat ... or, indeed, you and your family may be identified. My husband was a target at certain posts in our overseas life as Public Affairs Officer. That's, I think, part of the Washington perspective too.

That we do have choices. I don't have to go to certain parts of Washington if I don't want to.

Q: That's very true. I'd like to get a clearer picture of how FLO fits into the Department, and whether that has changed since it was first established in 1978. At some point I remember seeing M/FLO, and now it's M/DGP/FLO. So management-wide, who is responsible for FLO, and who do you report to?

MINUTILLO: Well, actually we have in fact, a new organizational chart, and there's a large one out there, which has always been out there. We are still part of the large area of Management. The Under Secretary for Management is still the person to whom the FLO director reports. That has not changed, and it has never changed since the beginning.

Q: That's what the "M" stands for.

MINUTILLO: That's what the "M" stands for, is Management. And Management is the largest area, I think, in the State Department. It includes all of these other offices which are listed here, the Bureau of Administration, Consular Affairs, Finance and Management, Refugees, etc. What has changed ... it's likely I would say, is that the direct reporting that I do, is through the Director General of the Foreign Service. What was done in the last year was that the Under Secretary for Management wanted to group together all of these people-related offices, including MED, the Bureau of Medical Services. And it left the Liaison Office to work with more closely with the Director General, which is what we do. But as you can see from the overall chart, we still are quite a separate organization.

Q: But now you report directly to the Director General's office ...

MINUTILLO: That's why the DGP is there. And it really is an appropriate kind of grouping, I think. I meet regularly with the Director General, and with the Director of the Bureau of Medical Services, and other people in the Director General's office.

Q: How often would you say you do that?

MINUTILLO: I have a weekly meeting.

Q: And I assume based on this structural chart FLO would be funded by the Bureau of Management then?

MINUTILLO: We're fully funded by the State Department. Our budget does come through the Bureau of Management, but we have a separate budget. Which has meant that we have a fair amount of autonomy in terms of funding the programs that we do. Publications ... that's a big part, support and training of CLOs.

Q: Perhaps you can address the way the responsibilities are spread out in the office? You're the director, and then the number of given areas. The names kind of explain what they're responsible for but perhaps you have some additional things to say? What is currently available in different services.

MINUTILLO: One of the things when I first came to the office ... as I said I was aware of what went on here to some extent. I had been the educational counselor in this office for a year before becoming the director, but I still needed to have a really clear sense of how you had this in the office, how did we define the line between providing individual client services. Someone comes through the door, and we do a one-on-one. How do we balance that off with the need to provide a more systematic approach to change? So what I put together was another little chart in the briefing book that I'll give you later. I put together this triangle. It gave me a visual sense of how we were allocating our responsibilities. I have, at the base of the triangle, that this office was established to deal with issues that affect the Foreign Service family as an employee based on the fact that we're living and working and moving. That's why we need to have someone addressing it. The issues that affect the Foreign Service family, and advocating on behalf of those families and employees for positive change. That was the debate.

Q: You mentioned ...

MINUTILLO: ... families and employees. Well, I really feel that we have to be very careful, and very specific now. The Foreign Service ... our office does not represent only the traditional family. That is, an employee and a wife, and a child. If you were a single employee, you are still going to be impacted by the Foreign Service life. You're going to be impacted by moving every three years. You're going to be impacted by the separation that you have from your extended family, elderly parents; responsibility that you may have for those families.

So, while I think in concept from the time the office was established that was recognized, either in conscious and wanted to make sure that we raise consciousness among all of our clients, that we are here not only for the traditional family, but for the single employee who is part of this whole Foreign Service. So that's at the base. The issues and the advocacy. And that means that we have to spend a lot of time on looking at the individual issue this person brings, and that person brings, and saying, "Should we advocate for some change?" Does this mean that we've got to go to senior management, go to the Congress with legislative changes?

But in addition to that, we're not just a policy office. We don't sit here behind closed doors and write policy papers. We could, we don't because it was never intended to do just that. It was intended, this office, to be that plus an office where individuals could come in and be assisted.

I think those two things really are unique in the context of the State Department, and even in other government programs. A lot of governments will have a policy office, but they don't combine it necessarily with a service office. How do we find out what these issues are? That's always a question I keep asking. It's through these client services. When the education officer has seen repeatedly, a particular thing coming up ... I'll give you an example. When she keeps hearing from Foreign Service families that they're sending their children to a junior year abroad ... you send your child from London to a junior year abroad. But the regulations don't permit you to use the educational travel allowance because the child is not in school in the United States. Then that says something to us beyond what the educational counselor can do to help you individually. What it says is that we have to deal with this as an issue. So we would take that, and in the process of working that through the system to try to get legislative change.

Q: It sounds to me that the numbers involved here, and what I mean is that if enough people are asking, looking for certain services, then they become important enough for issues.

MINUTILLO: Well, in a sense that sounds like we don't pay attention unless it something that's endemic. No, I don't think that's necessarily true. If you have an individual issue, for example, you want to find a boarding school for your family, your child, that's one of our client services. The education counselor will meet with you, will take a profile of your child, etc., and specifically work with you to find a boarding school.

Q: Sure, of course I understand that part. I guess I'm thinking of the advocacy part that in order to get more benefits, etc. ...

MINUTILLO: Oh, I see what you mean. What you've hit on is really one of the parts of my job, which is to determine the areas that we are going to attempt to institute programs, or advocate for change.

Q: That must be a pretty difficult position to be in. How do you really decide what is important enough to push for institutional changes.

MINUTILLO: We rely on both the clients that bring the issues to us, [and] on the professional staff who are dealing with issues all the time, and looking for a better way, a more efficient way. Not everything needs to have legislative change, but a lot of things can be more effectively dealt with in a systematic way. For example, when we had a few thousand evacuees during the Gulf crisis, lots of people in Washington, lots of people said, "I don't know what to do. I don't know my way around." Well, what that indicated is beyond helping individuals coming through the door, maybe you ought to have a seminar, a workshop. So we quickly put together with the Overseas Briefing Center a workshop called "Getting reconnected in Washington." We invited all the evacuees who were in the Washington area, and we notified others who were not in the area in case they might want to come.

One of the things, I think, that makes this job in the office exciting is that it's not stagnant. If we are finding, for example, that with teenagers we're always finding issues with teenagers. Maybe one of the things that we may do is to send materials overseas to be distributed by the CLOs to families returning to Washington. Again, looking at a more effective and efficient manner of dealing with whatever the issue is.

Q: You mentioned OBC and organizing a workshop for the evacuees, and also earlier you mentioned the fact that you see FLO as a place for both employees and families that return. I was hoping that you could discuss a little bit about the relationship between FLO and these other organizations such as AFSA, OBC, AAFSW, and how you see FLO fit in with these other organizations, and there may be some others that I don't know of.

MINUTILLO: Often we are confused with OBC, particularly in the field. One may mean the CLOs or the community members. They're not sure whether, "Let's see now, where do you take those courses, at your office or OBC?" "Who has the locator files? Your office or OBC?" "Who has the Post Report?" OBC, which is part of the Foreign Service Institute, is the training arm of the Foreign Service Institute, a family training program, and security overseas. They are in a position principally to tell you what they do, but this is how we kind of differentiate. We are part of the Bureau of Management within the management structure of the State Department, and responsible for advising management on family issues, recommending and implementing programs, managing the overseas CLO program, and providing services in specific areas such as education, spouse employment, personal and community crisis. In fact, the FAM, the Foreign Service Manual, really does detail what our responsibilities are. So the authorization for what we are tasked with doing, is in the Foreign Service Manual.

Q: For FLO.

MINUTILLO: I haven't looked at OBC. I presume they're there too. So we're part of the Bureau of Management, and our responsibilities are advising, recommending, and overseeing programs. OBC is also an official part of [the] federal government. That distinguishes us from AFSA, and AAFSW.

Q: They're not part of the State Department. Do you find that you are doing similar or different things than say, AAFSW and AFSA?

MINUTILLO: Well, I think that we're all ... there are certain concerns that each organization has. How it carries those things out, what it is responsible for doing, is certainly different. I have a much closer relationship with AAFSW than I do with AFSA, so I really can't speak too much to AFSA. But with AAFSW, which is an independent organization, certainly concerns of Foreign Service families, some of the issues that we care about are certainly the thing. I'm a member of AAFSW so I support the goals that AAFSW has. In my role as the director of FLO, I'm responsible to the State Department for carrying out certain jobs.

Q: I presume that you have constant contacts with OBC, with the Director there, and also with the president of AAFSW?

MINUTILLO: I felt that it was really important for this office to have very close relations with AAFSW, and to that end, when I became the director, I requested of the president that someone from my office attend the board meetings as a guest, and she graciously allowed that. And then I meet regularly with the president, either I or someone from my staff attend the board meetings. I would probably do those things anyway as a member of AAFSW - go to the board meetings and some of the other things. But in my role as the director of this office, I think it's important for us to maintain a close relationship so that certain issues that AAFSW would be lobbying for that are of interest to us, we could discuss.

We don't lobby. FLO does not lobby. I am part of the State Department. I am not separate from it.

Q: But AAFSW is independent, so in a way they can sort of define things, the things that they want to do with a little bit more freedom.

MINUTILLO: I would say that in the area of lobbying for legislative change, AAFSW has really a very strong history.

Q: But how did the two help each other?

MINUTILLO: I think we can help each other because we have some common goals. We recognize that we're all of the Foreign Service. What I do in this office programmatically is very different from what AAFSW does.

Q: But to the same end for things.

MINUTILLO: Yes, and frankly there are other people in the State Department, the Director General of the State Department cares about the Foreign Service, and works in different ways toward bettering the Foreign Service.

Q: Is it fair to say that you don't offer training as such, so when you feel that a certain kind of training is necessary that you would turn to OBC for that?

MINUTILLO: OBC or someone else in the Foreign Service Institute, not necessarily OBC. For instance, one of the things I had as a goal when I became director regarding the CLO program was to establish CLO training, professional CLO training in Washington just as we have training for administrative officers, B&F officers, or personnel, etc. I mentioned that I had attended a regional conference overseas, and I wanted to continue with that but I wanted to add something. I wanted to have professional CLO training. So one of the first things I did as director was to discuss with the director of the Foreign Service Institute who at that time was Brandon Grove, or he was by the time I started this program, to discuss with him and the Dean of the School of Professional Studies, how we could cooperate in offering training to CLOs, and not through the Overseas Briefing Center, but through the School of Professional Studies because this would be for CLO employees. So I turned to them and I got an agreement from them to provide - not by giving money to bring the CLOs here, but by providing a trainer to help us design the program. So the School of Professional Studies has now offered - I guess we began in 1988, the first year that I was here - a CLO training program. It has a number, I don't know ... MQ, or whatever, and we have a trainer from the School of Professional Studies who has worked with us, and we designed it together, and then we give it jointly. Obviously a lot of the content for presentation comes from this office, but the design and the training has been supported by FSI.

Q: I thought that most of the time you don't get [training while] working overseas, so who is to go to the CLO training?

MINUTILLO: CLOs.

Q: So they have done the jobs overseas, and then they would come back here for the training?

MINUTILLO: I started out by having a CLO training program once a year, September, notifying posts worldwide then selecting from among those nominated, the newest CLOs. The first year I think we brought 20, which is consistent with other kinds of training done for professionals.

Q: Could you perhaps give me a rough idea of what is included in this CLO professional training?

MINUTILLO: This is what's so interesting because what I was trying to do, and I shouldn't say just I, Terry Williams who was the CLO support officer and who joined the staff shortly after I became director, we really worked together on this. It was one of biggest first goals. What we wanted to do was to bring the CLOs here, and we wanted to do generic training: what makes you a better CLO? How do you assess the community? How do you communicate? How do you do a briefing? How do you learn to work within the bureaucracy, on your post?

Q: Now I see the professional aspect that you were talking about.

MINUTILLO: That's what we were aiming at, so what we did was we designed a program, and we had the CLOs off-site just as they do for the A-100 training. We worked on these various segments: more effective meetings, and some of the things that you really have to do as a CLO. Now mind you, not only as a CLO if you're an Admin officer, but we were focusing on what is really important. So we had a segment on effective meetings, on MBTI [Meyers/Briggs Temperament Indicator], we do the type indicator at the beginning part of the training to help the CLO identify her own, or his own, strengths. And then to recognize profiles of other people. And then we go through some segments on influencing, and how to accept change, depending upon the kind of people you have around you. More effective meetings, communications, presentations, cultural skills, and what it means to be a professional. So, that's the kind of generic stuff that we do off-site. We do that at a training facility in West Virginia, somewhere off-site for three days. And then we bring the group here to the State Department and we have three days of training here so that the CLOs can meet Department Officials. (End Tape 1, Side A)

Q: We were talking about?

MINUTILLO: The CLO training, and I really have to tell you this. I'm still very excited about it because it was a dream in my mind from the time I was a CLO, and I said how excited I was about having gone to the CLO regional conference. Well, I recognized that probably wasn't enough. We needed something generic that could be given and could go across regional lines. So, I said that we bring them off-site, and we do this generic professional development. And then we come back to the State Department, and they have a chance to have briefings with, and consultations with their bureaus, and to learn what is the linkage between the post and the bureau. They meet with the Office of Overseas Schools. And one of the new things that we developed within the past year was a segment on crisis management. Have you been abroad yet?

Q: No.

MINUTILLO: You've got a lot of exciting things in store. One of the things that the Diplomatic Security Bureau does, they go overseas and they do what are called CME, Crisis Management Exercise, and they do that also as part of the training for security officers. What it is is a simulation, a two-day simulation of a real crisis. And the participants are members of the Country Team, and they are working under a compressed time period with a progressively deteriorating situation. That could be a proposed attack on the school, a bomb threat, and in fact, real things happening. And the participants each have a job, one person is the CLO, one is the Admin officer, one is the Public Affairs Officer, etc. A real simulation, but it's so well done that you really get a lot of adrenaline flowing.

I have felt that with the increased responsibility that the CLO has during a crisis, that I wanted to beef up this part of our training. So I went to the people in Diplomatic Security, and worked with them and got their concurrence to develop a simulation crisis management exercise one-half day that we could do here for CLOs during the training program. They designed a sort of shortened version of what they use overseas, and what they use for the regional security officers. It's very exciting, and it's a very useful learning tool. So the CLOs then here participate in a crisis management exercise right here in the task force. What they go away with is a recognition of what happens in a crisis, what their role is because one of them is the CLO, and what other people are doing. What happens in Washington. So what they're going away with, I think, is a tremendous learning. So we've added that to the Washington part of the training.

We have people from the Bureau of Medical Services who come and talk with the CLOs about confidentiality, referral. How to limit what they're doing. And then we have members of [the] FLO staff, and that's a key part of it. When we go abroad to a regional conference, I can't bring everybody from the staff, but when we bring the CLOs here, they get a chance to see Washington, and to consult with all of the players back here. So it's a very rich experience.

Q: Can you describe the duties of the day, of the week? What kind of things do you normally have to deal with in say a week's schedule?

MINUTILLO: I start out my week on Monday mornings with a small meeting in the Director General's office, where I meet with the Director General; with the Deputy Assistant Secretary in her office; Dr. Kemp, who is the Director of Medical Services; and also someone from the Legal staff - it's a small meeting. And that gives us a kind of up-date on what's coming up for the week in each of our areas. We highlight issues that are of interest to the Director General, medical areas, etc. So it really gives us a kind of broad brush. And at that same time we'll have a discussion on some things that have gone on in the past week that we all want to discuss. We get a chance to hear what the Director General is going to be doing for that week.

That's one of the key times for me to take some of these issues and mention them. Either mention them just so I'm dropping the seed, or bringing up something that later on in the week I may be sending up an issue paper on, or requesting a decision on. So that's a very important beginning part of my week within the structure of the State Department management.

Then one of the first things I have to do, and I try to do that before I go to that meeting, is to read the daily traffic. We get cable traffic from everywhere in the world.

Q: You mean the traffic that comes into FLO directly.

MINUTILLO: That's correct. We get a stack of about an inch of cable traffic which comes from posts. Some of it is for our action, some of it is just info-ing us. For example, we'll get the material that's specifically for us - e.g., the CLO reports, the activity reports.

Q: That's a weekly thing?

MINUTILLO: No, we get those three times a year, they dribble in. We would get action material about changes in the CLO program: somebody is coming on board, or they're leaving, or there's a change in their hours. We get requests for materials. And we get confidential cable traffic as well. So I get two stacks of traffic that has to be read every day. And then there's action on it by different members of the staff. But I have to read everything, and then I pass it on to my deputy director and she reads everything as well.

I usually meet with my deputy director every day. We don't have a formal meeting time, but we see what's happening.

Q: And the current deputy director is Kendall Montgomery.

MINUTILLO: We divide, in general here, anything that has to do with policy with the Family Liaison office goes through me. And Kendall deals with all administrative matters in the office, and personnel matters. So what we're doing every day is work on what's happening. If we've read the morning paper, and there's been some bombing in Venezuela, had we heard anything? Is there anything going on? Are there meetings that we have to attend? So we're very much tied in to what's happening all over the world on a daily basis. Either we'd get a call from another office, or one of the other staff members, Joanne Vaugh, who is the support services, she may have even been called at home if there's something going on, and would give me a briefing on that. So there's a lot of sort of daily stuff in keeping up with what's happening worldwide.

I go to a lot of regular meetings as well, and part of my work is staying in touch with other offices within the State Department through regular contact. I attend a meeting of all executive directors of the regional bureaus, and other bureaus in the State Department, which is chaired by the Director General. So I have a little card that has all of my meetings on it. Some of them are monthly, but when you add all of them up, there's a lot of those to go to. I said the regular weekly meeting with the Director General. We have a staff meeting in the Family Liaison office with his staff. Then I attend another meeting with all of the office directors for the Bureau of Personnel. So one part of my work is that.

I see staff members throughout the day, and it might be something on a policy question. For example, some staff member just today, just before I came in here, wanted to know what would I suggest that she do in a particular case involving a client. She would come to me if there's some question about the policy, how involved should she become in a personal family issue. When should we refer this to someone else. In divorce cases, which are always difficult, how do we provide client service, and not overstep what is appropriate for a government office to do?

Q: So you do get into the daily work as well. You are in tune with what goes on here as well as what goes on in the Department.

MINUTILLO: Oh, yes. This is why I think it's a great job.

I think it's just a wonderful job, and I have to say this is my fifth year, and it's my final year. And I have absolutely loved every minute of it, even the very tough times because it's a combination of individual work, and people. I see people as well. I don't have a whole client base as some of the other people in the office do, but I have standing orders to my receptionist that if someone wants to see me, that they should be put through.

Q: The way you run the office, is that your personal choice of how you want things done, or has it always been done in a similar fashion so the deputy tends to do with the administrative, etc.

MINUTILLO: I think every director has had a personal style, but the responsibilities of my position are different from the deputy director which is the deputy director/administrative officer. So that definitely does have administrative responsibilities. And I am tasked with public liaison as well. So part of what I do is work with other agencies, although we're fully funded by the State Department and part of the State Department. We work with all of the foreign affairs agencies.

Q: USIA and ...

MINUTILLO: ... USIA, AID, Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agriculture Service, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service. There are six foreign affairs agencies. They are official foreign affairs agencies. But there are a number of other agencies that send people overseas to our embassies and consulates. All of those people we consider part of our client base, and we consider their concerns our concerns.

Q: But they don't contribute to the funding, do they?

MINUTILLO: Well, we are part of the State Department.

Q: So the other foreign affairs agencies would all be under State Department as well?

MINUTILLO: No, the foreign affairs agencies are independent, but they work closely together. The Director General chairs a meeting regularly, which I sometimes attend as well, called the Board of the Foreign Service. The Board of the Foreign Service is composed of representatives from the other agencies who meet formally to discuss official liaison. All the foreign affairs agencies subscribe to the standard regulations, for example. So there are official joint agreements. So when I call on my colleagues in USIA, I'm informing them about the programs that we have, and I often will go into a briefing. So that's another thing that I do, and other staff members do as well. Next week I'm going to USIA and I'll be briefing the director of Foreign Service personnel and his staff on some of the new programs that we have, and passing out some of the materials that we have. So that they in turn can be informing their people here.

But beyond the foreign affairs agencies which have these official links anyway, we maintain liaison with the other agencies like DEA, Drug Enforcement Agency. They send a lot of people overseas. We speak at their training programs. DIA, Defense Intelligence Agency, has people at most of our embassies as well. We speak not only at the attaché's training, but to the attaché's spouse training. I think that's important because some of the things that we do, almost everything that we do, will affect those people as well. And some of the other agencies send a very small number of people overseas, and they're not going to have a whole separate support structure. So part of my work is that kind of liaison with the other agencies that send people abroad under the Chief of Mission.

Q: They're really a unifying force.

MINUTILLO: I think so. I think that's a good way of putting it. I really feel that's something you need about this office. When we talk about spouse employment, we're not talking about employment of State Department spouses only. We're talking about the impact of moving every three years, and how that affects you whether you're with DEA, or State Department, or DIA, or some other agency. I really think that that has been a kind of unique aspect, and is still a unique aspect of this work.

You started asking what do I do on a daily basis. I come in, I read the traffic, I always go around to talk to everybody in the office. Our offices have always been here. We have extended a little bit.

Q: I noticed. I heard from Stephanie, that this started out as a clothes closet with three people, and that was all.

MINUTILLO: And it was still right here. In fact this was the closet. We've added what used to be a corridor and that was a big help because we didn't have a reception area, we just had a little office here. One of my regular meetings is with the Deputy Assistant Secretary in charge of operations, and throughout my regular meetings with him - it was a previous person - I kept saying, "We're busting out of here. We need some more space." I said, "Why can't we use the corridor, just put up a wall." For years we had heard that you can't because it's marble out there, and blah, blah. Anyway, I got an agreement from him, and within a very short time we had put up a wall and we had our reception area which really increased our space a lot. So those meetings with other people in the Department, I think, are really important. What else I do on sort of a daily basis? I will proofread publications that are coming out. So I guess on a daily basis, the director of the FLO office is a manager of the programs that we are responsible for. A person that people want to talk to. People will call from overseas and they want to talk about a personal concern.

Q: I want to get back to one thing about your meetings with the other offices in the State Department. How is FLO perceived by the other offices in the State Department? What's your impression.

MINUTILLO: I think they look at this office as an office with a good deal of commitment, and an office to pay attention to. And I think that due to a steady progression over the years from its conception of a serious work. I think the people that proceeded me in this position, and other staff members of the office, have been very professional. And its an office that should be considered when people think of quality of life, when they think of families. I think they recognize that we're the office that deals with those things.

Q: Do you feel that FLO is sufficiently well known in the State Department as to its functions, and focus?

MINUTILLO: I think that within the State Department we're very well known. And I think we've come a long way in terms of exposure within the State Department. I have briefed Secretary Shultz, and then Baker, Assistant Secretaries, and part of the Foreign Service in Ambassadorial seminars for the past five years, and Ambassadors in the field who havn't had a part of his briefing from [FLO]. I briefed individual Ambassadors, and DCMs, and Admin officers one-on-one in addition to speaking at the Ambassadorial seminar. So I would say that within the State Department that we're well known, and I think respected.

One of the things that I do also regularly is to brief inspectors. And there are teams of inspectors who go out to embassies; they have to be inspected periodically. When those people are preparing to go to do the inspection, they meet with a lot of different people here to get prepared. We send those teams copies of reports from the CLOs, and then we brief them individually. For example, I had someone in yesterday going to Lima. So we see a lot of people, either one-on-one, or in the presentations that we do.

Q: It's nice that you also reach up to the highest levels of the embassies, mainly the ambassadors, and the DCMs, because I'm sure that that would help when they get overseas to know what kind of things FLO offers to families in the Foreign Service.

MINUTILLO: I think that's important because the Ambassador can often set the tone. One of the things that we're talking about in this office when I meet with the ambassadors, or with the DCMs, has to do with the morale of an embassy, and what you can do about it. I can't tell an ambassador how to be an ambassador; I'm not the person to do that. But a lot of the information we have, the experiential and the anecdotal evidence that we have, we're very happy to pass on. What works? And that's the kind of thing we share, as well as particular stuff on the post. We can provide a profile on the post which is very different from the Post Report. Because of the reports we have, because of the deeper things we have from CLOs. And from the post visits that I made, and other staff members.

Q: So you really provide a worldwide perspective that someone going out as an ambassador would need, and would be very useful.

MINUTILLO: I think that's why they continue to come for that kind of briefing. What's it going to be like out there? What are the pitfalls. What kind of things should I pay attention to in terms of morale, or quality of life? I would say that in the State Department we're pretty well known, and that's a testimony, I think, to all the people who have been here before me.

Q: Good, good. I'm sure you've done a lot too in the five years you've been here. To follow up on the CLO program, the professional training, would you tell me about some of the pending issues, current issues, that FLO is involved with?

MINUTILLO: Well, the positions in FLO, when this office was established, it was established as excepted service, although there are other offices, or positions, that are excepted service.

Q: What does that mean exactly?

MINUTILLO: It means that these positions are not career conditional. These are not regular civil service positions, although I hold a civil service grade. But from working here I don't get career status to move into another position. These are unique positions. They were established to be a two-year time limit.

Q: For all the positions as well?

MINUTILLO: That's right. It was found out that really two years was a very short time, and it was later extended to five years. So we are a five-year limited appointment. Its more in a sense to what Peace Corps staff are. Peace Corps positions are five year limits. So there is a history in the federal government for that. The philosophy behind that was that these positions would be staffed by professionals, but they would not be positions into which civil service move. So that you wouldn't go from being in one office down the hall, into another. And I think that still makes sense. So this is my fifth year.

Q: So it's almost like preventing other civil service people from getting into FLO. Am I understanding it correctly?

MINUTILLO: Well, it isn't so much that as these are not career conditional. They don't provide someone from this position here, as a stepping stone into the regular civil service. They were established really, as you can imagine, to be staffed by people who have had overseas experience. And that's still a very important part. Everyone on this staff comes from the ranks of having experience abroad.

Q: I assume that they're all spouses - male or female?

MINUTILLO: Yes. One is the daughter of a Foreign Service. But everyone has had experience in the Foreign Service context, and I think that is still very important.

Q: Before we touch on that, you were starting to say ...

MINUTILLO: This is my fifth year - in May I will have completed my fifth year, and it will be the fifteenth year of the establishment of the FLO office. A director at a historic year during the tenth year, the anniversary year of this office.

Q: Whom did you succeed?

MINUTILLO: I followed Sue Parsons, and she was actually the director at the time that we celebrated the tenth anniversary. I was on the staff of the educational counselor, and during that period applied for the directorship. So from that historical perspective for me it's very important.

Q: Yes, from the tenth to the fifteenth, that's a pretty impressive time there. Perhaps then you can tell me what were the kind of things that ... we kind of covered that along [the] way, but the kind of things that you were handed with, if you will, when you took over as the director, and now as you will be leaving in May, what are the current concerns and things that you would like to have done by the time you leave?

MINUTILLO: When I came in, we were looking at I would say some changes in the Foreign Service, and in the American society, regarding the two income family. During these five years that I've been here, I think that a recognition of a two career, the two income is so much more a part of American society, and has impacted on the Foreign Service in a way that had been a little less before that time. So one of my concerns was, what can we be doing about this? A lot had already been done. We had established the program of bilateral work agreements, but we have during these five years seen an increase in the number of bilateral work agreements. And I think that's a renewed push for analyzing, and recommending, and establishing some programs to deal with that kind of change. In these five years the people coming into the Foreign Service now, I think, have an expectation of career opportunities, and a greater expectation of information. I mean the information management changes in our society have been tremendous in the last five years. People expect to have computers, to have on-line programs. So one of the challenges I have had, I think, is in information management. How can we reach people, the thousands of people overseas who are at embassies and consulates who don't necessarily come through Washington? How can we make them aware of programs, or what it's like to raise children overseas, or how to access information. That's our role in information management. That's been one real challenge.

A second has been in the area of spouse employment, and as I mentioned, I think, in these five years the increase in the expectation of a second career.

A third, I think, has been a real increase in the dangers, and if not an increase in the danger, certainly a more awareness on our part of the crisis, and security issues overseas. And my desire to continue to deal with those in a systematic way.

Other issues that I'm still dealing with, and I'm going to pass on to my successor, dealing with elderly parents is a main concern in our society. And think of the impact of the Foreign Service overlay. I mean, if you are living here ... I lived in Washington, my family lives in Massachusetts, not that far away, nevertheless when my mother became ill and I started considering what would I do - what will I do if she can't stay at home with my father? What will I do? What resources are available to us in Massachusetts? How will I deal with it? I work full time here, how much can my brother and his wife, my sister-in-law ...

Q: And you in DC.

MINUTILLO: Then add to that, if I lived in Kuala Lumpur? Or Paraguay? Or Beijing? Or Greece? So I think that that's a very, very big issue which is still facing us. I mean, as part of our society it doesn't get any easier if you're in the Foreign Service context. I'm not going to have an answer to it in this office but one of the things that I think we have to do, and are doing, is to provide some information to people in the far flung corners of the world. And there certainly will be some legislative things that we're facing too. More people are taking dependent parents with them.

Q: I noticed that.

MINUTILLO: So those are the kinds of things that I think are on our plate.

Q: How about the divorced partners, or displaced partners?

MINUTILLO: Actually divorce in the Foreign Service is as much an issue as it is in American society. Everything that happens in American society, happens in the Foreign Service. And because of being abroad, I think the difficulties of dealing with it because of access to information, institutional support structures, are different. They're not there. So what you have, I think, are the same issues, but intensified. In the last year the publications that we've put together, I think, sort of shows any areas that have been of so much concern. In the last year we produced a booklet, The Foreign Service Family and Divorce. We produced adoption guidelines for the Foreign Service family. Again, something which isn't a problem, it might be something you're just looking forward to doing. But how do you find out about it?

Q: Just the logistics of how things are done sometimes. Because that also helps you figure out the kind of problems you may face individually. You may not have thought about the way of how to do something until you have the information, and then you can consider, "Well, this doesn't really suit me." That is important too, it's not really just dealing with the problems when they come up, but providing information before you have the problem.

MINUTILLO: Exactly. So it isn't all these problems. Assignment in Washington. There's an update on a publication that we did to assist people returning to Washington. It gives a wealth of information. What do I do now? is a source book on regulations.

Q: Does that also come up ...

MINUTILLO: This was joint, a publication between OBC and FLO. These were done here. Evacuation guidelines. Don't leave home without them, we published a lot of those. That kind of thing I think shows what we're trying to do in the area of pulling together information that's going to help people make good decisions.

Q: ... is what I have been hearing both at FLO and OBC.

MINUTILLO: That's right.

Q: How about children of the Foreign Service? Have their concerns changed since you became director here?

MINUTILLO: One of the exciting things that has happened since I became director, it just happened. It's not even on this staff list, is the establishment of a new position, and it will be listed as AFMA, American Family Members Associates Coordinator, that's an unemployment program. But in addition to dealing with the AFMA program, this staff member has responsibility to be the youth coordinator.

Q: This is brand new?

MINUTILLO: Brand new. She is on board now, her name is Karen Lundahl., and she's the AFMA coordinator, and youth program coordinator.

A couple of interesting things have happened. One which I'm very proud of is somewhat outside the office, and that's the establishment of the Foreign Service Youth Foundation which I'm a founding member of.

Q: Is that AWAL?

MINUTILLO: No, no. AWAL is Around the World in a Lifetime, which is a teen group. The Foreign Service Youth Foundation was established just a couple of years ago as an umbrella organization. It has tax-free status so that it could provide support to AWAL, it could be an advocacy group, and it could be somewhat independent. That began really as a result of a lot of interest, apart from what I could do in the office. There are certain things that I can't do from the office, but that we can't do, that an independent organization can do and that's part of how the Foreign Service Youth Foundation came about. But I also felt that we wanted to focus in the office officially on youth issues. So that's why I wanted to get a part of this new staff person dealing with youth issues. And she will be the linkage to our overseas posts in helping them either get some teen programs established. Keep in touch with CLOs on kids who are coming back to the States. I guess from my own experience, I had a child who was three years old when we started [in] the Foreign Service and who is now 28. So his entire life really was as a Foreign Service child. And a lot of the things I know now, I wish I knew when I was a young parent. But maybe we ought to talk about that a little later, I don't know how we're doing on time.

Q: We're fine. I'm still interested in a little bit more on the youth programs, and whether there have been changes, and the concerns of the younger sector, if you will, of the Foreign Service. What are they worried about?

MINUTILLO: What are the young people worried about? Well, I'll tell you - this is really interesting. One of the things that we've been doing for the last few years is having what we call dialogues, with the cooperation of USIA, United States Information Agency, and their Worldnet program, or the other communications satellite things they have. We get a team of kids here, and a group of kids at a post overseas, for example, Cairo, and it's live. The kids in Cairo will ask a question from the group of kids here - kids in Cairo who are going to be coming back. So we did that with about five posts overseas at different locations, and the kinds of questions they asked in preparation for coming here.

Q: Things that they wouldn't ask their parents?

MINUTILLO: If they did, they wouldn't listen to the answers, they didn't care what their parents thought, and they certainly didn't want to ask these questions of other adults. Things like they wanted to know about were: what's the drug situation like? Am I going to be pressured in America, coming back here, concerns about that. How much do kids drink? What about the sexual mores? Remember, here they are, they're in Cairo, or they're in Nairobi, or they're in Santiago, and they're going to come back. They're going to go to high school here. Everybody has sexual questions these days.

Q: At fifteen?

MINUTILLO: At fifteen, I mean, am I going to feel like I have to? Well, the reason I said that they were not going to ask me, or ask you, or ask their parents, is that we're going to give them our views. They want to know from their peers. What's it really like? A new one this year was violence. How much violence is there in American schools? This is what we read about, this is what we see. Do people really carry weapons? How am I going to fit in? So I would say for the last couple of years we've been hearing questions about alcohol, [and] drugs. But violence was new this year. A bottom line thing that they're always concerned about is, how am I going to make friends? And how do they look? What are they wearing? What are kids wearing these days? Quite honestly though with CNN in so many places overseas, there is less feeling of isolation. So kids abroad are seeing more than they used to five years ago. But they're still concerned about, how am I going to fit in. And they're really concerned about behavior, and attitudes, and these things that we hear so much about.

Q: You're not hearing here actually something equal, if you will, that they feel somewhat isolated. They don't really know their country in a way that they need from first hand information. These questions that they're asking seem to be things that they have read in papers and magazines, on TV, in movies, etc., but they probably have spent most of their lives overseas, and they really need some kind of support, information, to come back to in order to emigrate into America.

MINUTILLO: That's it exactly. If you are fifteen, and you're coming back to go to high school here, and you've spent the last three years overseas, it's different. If you spent the last five years, you haven't been a teenager in the United States. So that's exactly one of our concerns, and one of our problematic focuses. What can we do? What kinds of information can we send out? We sent out packets of material to the CLOs to distribute to the kids. All kinds of stuff, articles that other kids have written on dress.

Q: Written by kids?

MINUTILLO: Yes, written by kids. The AWAL group produces an international edition of their newsletter once a year in the spring. We send that worldwide, and some of the articles that kids have written are, "How to Get Around in Washington". (End of tape 1)

Continuation of interview: January 13, 1993

Q: Maryann, we were talking about the concerns of youth foundations the last time, and I think you have a few things you'd like to say about the youth problems?

MINUTILLO: Well, I think our children, the Foreign Service young people who travel with us around the world, or are born overseas, or are moved back and forth, are among the most interesting people in this whole Foreign Service community. And from my own experience of going abroad as a young Foreign Service wife with a three year old to Guatemala, and having that child of ours go to school for the first time in kindergarten where his playmates were Spanish speaking, and observing his integration into the world community, I think that has been one of the most exciting parts of my husband's and my life in the Foreign Service. And I think one of the things that has been most impressive to me, is recognizing that our kids are tremendously resilient. At the same time I think that there are some predictable things that occur when children are moved, things of identity. When people say, "Where are you from?" You know, it's one of those throw-away lines, how many times in your life do people say, "Oh, where are you from?" And I'm sure that some of this same identity issue is true of a foreign born spouse. So with the Foreign Service kids who may have been born ... my son, for example, was born in Spain. We happen to be of Italian background, and our name is Italian, my home, and my husband's original home, were both in Massachusetts. And yet my son spent all of his life in places like Guatemala, Honduras and Argentina, speaking Spanish; and then in the Middle East and back and forth to Washington.

So that kind of throw-away line, "Where are you from?" to a Foreign Service kid can have a whole lot ... so the business of identity, I think, is one that is important. I think there are times in the development of a young person who is moving around the world, there are times that are more critical than others in the need for support. And it is that that has interested me as a parent for many years and for the last several years as a professional. So I think the work that I have been doing with young people ... some years ago I was at the Overseas Briefing Center. I had a contract of what is called the Youth Programs Coordinator. And since then the work of the Foreign Service Youth Foundation around the world, has been really rewarding. What I think I am very pleased and proud of, is the fact that today I think the State Department, through the Family Liaison Office, and through the Overseas Briefing Center, and with AAFSW, all are interested in providing a very definite support for our young people at this critical time.

We now have developed ... actually what we've done is we put down on paper what we're calling the Flow of Care. It really is simply a way of saying, "Here is what we, all of these organizations, Office of Overseas Schools, we all have a little part of it" And we are pointing out what we are officially doing as a young person, as a Foreign Service kid, is preparing to go overseas. What kinds of things can be provided in an overseas environment, and then what happens when they come back. And what we're doing is a whole series of things from preparation, or through seminars, and workshops for young people, to worldwide dialogues when kids are overseas and ready to come back. Did I mention that the last time we talked?

Q: Yes, a little bit.

MINUTILLO: With USIS, the U.S. Information Service, with their cooperation, and their facilities, we have been able to get in the spring groups of young people, at various locations overseas, South America, Africa, the Far East, and Europe, groups of kids together asking questions, and having a dialogue with a panel of Foreign Service teens here. So that's an example of the kinds of things we are now doing on a regular basis. This will be the third year.

So when I say I'm proud, I think there are many, many people who have contributed to: a recognition of what our kids need; and a determination to put something into place.

Q: The last time you also mentioned that the kids asked about the questions on drugs, alcohol, sex, morale, and also grades. Was there something else that you would like to add to that?

MINUTILLO: I thought they were very revealing in terms of what kids overseas perceive is the youth scene here, and some of their real worries and concerns. They were worried about how safe it was in schools here. They were worried about the pressures that might be put on them to change their behavior.

Q: Was there something about race, and problems in South America?

MINUTILLO: Well, not so much race problems. I think when we were talking to kids from Africa, they wondered what perception the kids here had of people from other countries. They wouldn't name it necessarily cross-cultural, but it was cross-cultural and it was race. Our kids are very perceptive. Anyway, so those things to me have been very exciting. And what I look forward to is that this office, and the other organizations and offices, will continue to focus on what's important to helping our kids.

Q: How about in terms of raising children? Does the office try to work on a profile, predictable, behavior of children so you can help out the parents overseas?

MINUTILLO: That's exactly, I think, what we're working on. People like Dr. Rigamer, the State Department psychologist, has written very widely on resiliency. And he has been in a number of video tapes. So he identifies and helps parents recognize that when kids are about to leave the United States, leave Washington to go overseas, there's going to be a period of loss. There's going to be a real down time, and what helps is giving young people the opportunity to bring their own things. That's true for adults too. And sometimes the parents ... I know I've done this when we were moving from one place to another, and I'd say, "Oh, I don't want to go, I don't want to leave Honduras. I've got my friends here." And my husband would say, "Oh, but you're going to love it where we're going." Well, that was okay to say. I felt I had to, but one of the things Dr. Rigamer has said is, "Yes, I'm going to miss it too."

So it's that kind of thing. I'm not a real specialist, but what I've tried to do is to provide opportunities in a way for groups of people to come together with the specialists that can help us.

Q: Maybe you can give me an update on the survey that the office is doing?

MINUTILLO: Well, we are embarking on that, and we have ... I think mentioned in our last meeting, that we have contracted with a firm that does research. So that what we're planning on doing is a worldwide survey which will in a very professional way focus on what the issues are for family members and employees. A broad category of quality of life in the Foreign Service. We have a lot of [experience] and we've done surveys before, surveys that we've constructed ourselves. And what I've learned by talking with these specialists, researchers, is that in order to really have some statistical stability in value, to have a certain number, and you have to present questions in a certain way. And that's what we're doing. But the purpose of this is to be able to look at the whole overseas community. And I think as I mentioned before, that's not State Department only, and it's not foreign affairs agencies only. Our community overseas ... if you look at Tokyo, if you look at Buenos Aires, if you look at Abidjan, you say, "Okay, this is the official American community." The people who are part of that are from as many as 28 different federal government agencies, all of whom come under the umbrella of the chief of mission. And that could include agencies such as Customs, Drug Enforcement agencies, Justice, Library of Congress, Defense Intelligence agencies.

So I think our interest is, what is the overseas official community like? What are the dynamics of it? What are some of the demographics? So we're working through, right now, the questions of what we will be able to get from these responses, what we want to find out. We hope to have more on that at some future time, but right now we're in the early stages.

Q: Would that be furnished to everybody overseas, officers, employees, as well as dependents or families?

MINUTILLO: It will go to employees and dependents. It will not go to every single one. This is how the researchers can help us. (noise on tape) ... bring in a sample both of posts and people in order to get the kind of responses that will be useful. But we will use posts worldwide.

Q: Maryann, I mentioned last time about the Rockefeller and I was wondering what FLO's official view is on that? Perhaps you can explain a little bit to me.

MINUTILLO: Senator Rockefeller proposed legislation which addressed the issue of jobs in embassies overseas that are held by Foreign Service Nationals, FSN jobs, FSN positions. His proposal dealt with opening those jobs to Americans. Essentially what he was saying was - I have read the legislation - is that those jobs which are presently held by Foreign Service Nationals should not be restricted to Foreign Service Nationals. They should be open to all Americans. The emphasis for that, I believe, came from resident Americans overseas who want to have access to these jobs. "[This is] my embassy and I want to have a job that I see a host country national doing, and I know I can't. Here I am an American." That's the situation, particularly in western Europe where we have large embassies, and fairly large staffs of nationals, and staffed with a wage scale of Foreign Service Nationals is fairly high. So in that environment Rockefeller was responding to his constituency who pushed for this kind of legislation. When he proposed it, and once it got passed, Foreign Service jobs cannot be restricted to Foreign Service Nationals. When they become available, they have to be advertised for all Americans. Well, that also then includes American spouses in the embassy. So that's basically what the legislation says.

Now, where do we stand on it, and what are our concerns? One of my concerns is that as this is implemented, and jobs are open, that spouses of Americans who are assigned to the embassy will continue to have preference. The regulations now indicate that if a candidate applies for a position, that the spouse has preference in the hiring. And the reason for that is because of our continuous movement we are hindered from developing a career path. So that's the sense behind that and I think it's been very important. My understanding from Senator Rockefeller's office is that he doesn't have any intention of trying to remove that preference. If that's true, then I think that would allay one of my concerns, and one of my fears.

Another is that if an American resident does get the job that is now held by a Foreign Service National, and that resident American lives there for 20 years, then in effect, that job is just held by someone and it really doesn't open up anything to us either. So those are the two concerns that I have. That said, I think it is possible, and I think what we in this office have to work on, and we'll certainly do that is consultation with AAFSW and with the rest of the State Department, is to ensure that the standard procedures now for incoming - that our own people continue to have more openings than they had before. What we have to do is to try and make it work. And that's where I am.

The OP, Operating Procedures, for implementing this legislation has not been finalized. They have to be worked out in the State Department. What that means is they've got to now figure out, how are you going to advertise. And what happens if a national applies and two or three Americans, how are they evaluated, and judged. So that's the kind of thing that's now being developed.

Q: So it is possible that the American overseas would have the same kind of terms of employment as a spouse would have, that they can only keep a position for a couple of years, and not forever. Otherwise it would be just like a Foreign Service National.

MINUTILLO: Exactly. That's what the guidelines now will address, but we haven't gotten anything finalized. But all I think all of the parties who are working on this, people in the other offices in the State Department, AAFSW, etc. I think we now have to simply say, okay, these are the things we want, we don't want to hurt any group. We want to make sure that the ones that we represent are going to get the best possible situation. So I think it could work. The best possible [thing] this could mean that there will be more openings for Foreign Service spouses, as well as for resident Americans. So it's possible that this could even help us.

Q: Somebody mentioned that there may be problems with the countries if you take away the Foreign Service National jobs.

MINUTILLO: I don't think the suggestion by Rockefeller is that we remove all Foreign Service Nationals, but that the jobs be competitive, and not restricted to Foreign Service Nationals. Or that his position from what I've heard from his staff members say, is not to bar Americans from jobs, from applying for jobs.

Q: Was that the case before? I thought they were always open to Americans anyway.

MINUTILLO: No. Foreign Service Nationals positions in the embassy are identified as Foreign Service Nationals. Now there has been a given mechanism whereby a particular position, when it became available, when a Foreign Service National left, to convert that to what is called FSN/AFM, Foreign Service National/American Family Member. But that required a procedure, and it was only done under certain circumstances. So you can kind of see how this would be a very emotional issue.

Q: It's interesting. I remember another person pointed out that ... well, look around in the Washington area at all the embassies ... did you find Americans working in say in the Thai embassy, or Australian embassy? And that is true overseas. American embassies hire certainly a lot more Foreign Service Nationals than the embassies we see here in the United States. So in that sense you have to think about the Americans overseas.

MINUTILLO: I think the whole FSN program has been developed in order to have a structure to the continuity that really is necessary in an overseas mission, both in terms of language skills, in terms of [local customs]. I mean if you have to have someone who is clearing your furniture through customs, I think you want someone who knows how things work, who worked there and knows the local regulations are. It's a very important part of managing an embassy mission.

Q: Maryann, let me ask you about your staff. I think we might have mentioned last time that you now have a male spouse on the staff for the first time. And everybody is very excited about it, and perhaps you can describe those people that you have on the staff, and tell us a little bit more about the Foreign Service profile.

MINUTILLO: Well, the FLO staff is from the [FS community]. I think of the Foreign Service community in its broadest [sense]. That is people who are on the staff all have had overseas experience. They all have lived and worked in embassies overseas, and they come from different agencies. We have people who have been associated with AID, with USIA, the military, Foreign Commercial Service, U.S. Information Service, as well as State. But that kind of cross-section of the overseas community really does bring another dimension to diversity, which I think is important. What we haven't had, while we were established in 1978, is a gender diversity. That again has not been by design. Our job competition is very keen, and we were pleased at this time that the best candidate, and the one selected, was a young man who had had experience in American overseas schools and recently had come from Africa. He was working at the embassy, and his wife was a Foreign Service officer. So I think in a sense what we have in here is (voice on tape too faint to transcribe) ... how to manage that is strictly in the personnel area. The issues we would deal with though in the tandem couple is the tandem couple with children, the need for child care. Those people are going to arrive at post, and start working immediately. The impact of a crisis on a tandem couple, and that's an important one that we always track. If the husband and wife are both officers, say one is a communicator and the other is a consul, and there is a crisis at the post, dependents have to be evacuated, and the spouses and children, but both officers are necessary. Then what happens to the child? That's one of the things that tandem couples think about, work through. So it's that kind of thing that impact on a family and their quality of life that we are interested in, and pay attention to.

(very dim to end of tape - tape 2, side A. from here not transcribed - begin tape 2, side B)

Q: We were just talking about the future of the Foreign Service, and you mentioned a number of people that you'd like to recognize. I have one question about that actually, what has been the toughest thing for you as the director of this office?

MINUTILLO: Personally, the tough things, the challenges are always the most exciting and I really am very up for those. I don't like monotony, and I don't like the status quo. When I feel that I'm just sort of maintaining things, I find that not too interesting. I tell you one thing, when you try to keep your budget so that you can keep some programs intact, that's been a tough thing. And there have been times in the past, as you know, you hear about this all over the Department, budget crunch and the possibility of loss of programs. At first the loss of the CLO program overseas, or the wholesale reduction in the CLO program, that would be a real disaster, I think. We had to do a little amount of negotiating behind the scenes in selling our programs so that we maintained those services.

Q: What would be the number one issue for the new director coming in? It's several months away, but ...

MINUTILLO: The new director is going to have to find out ... make his or her own way, and I'm sure that one of the things that a new director will want to do is to look around and see where we are now, and come up with an exciting bold agenda. And I know it will be a person who will do just that.

Q: ... a lot of good people before us so ...

MINUTILLO: I should probably though point out that I think the issues such as the employment of family members continue to be really at the top of the list of things that we're paying attention to, and ensuring that we move ahead on institutionalizing some of the changes. The AFMA program, American Family Member Associates program, which we want to open up again to applicants. Once we open it, we won't want to keep it open. We want to move into phase two whereby we hope there will be positions identified that family members will move into. So that we really structure that kind of opportunity. So those are the things that I think we are moving toward, and I would expect that they aren't done on what remains on my watch, a new director will.

Q: It's almost like really inevitable if you're going to ensure good quality of the Foreign Service officers, those that want to come in, they're not going to come if their family are not going to be taken care of.

MINUTILLO: That's right, and I think this is the reality of today's world. We have people who are capable, who need to have maximum opportunity, and I want to see our skill's [data bank] doubled. Oh, we've started a new campaign, just beginning right now. We're cabling all the CLOs and asking to help us. We want to double the participation in our data bank, our skills bank. We now have 3,000 people, we want to have at least 6,000.

Q: Why is that?

MINUTILLO: Well, for various reasons. One, in order to be able to assist people with jobs, we need to know who they are. Because the better our skills bank is, the better we can work with an embassy overseas on what their needs are. The better we can respond to an American in international business for what their needs are, so we want to double that, and then we want to double the number of what we do for American international business. So those are some goals that I hope we can accomplish in the very near future.

Q: Well, Maryann, I want to end with a more personal side of your Foreign Service contribution. I notice on your bio that you were involved in a lot of theater groups, that seemed to have jumped out at me. I'd like you to tell me a little bit more about that.

MINUTILLO: It's interesting that you noted that. When I was writing all that stuff for the bio, going back to not only jobs but other things that we did, I noticed it also. We have had more fun with community theater from our very first post. At the very first post, Guatemala in 1967. I was interested in the theater when I was in college. My husband had the musical skills, he played the guitar, he sang, but we hadn't done any of this kind of community theater stuff. When we went to our First post and went to one of the plays that was put on, "Oh, this really looks like fun." And then someone from the theater group said, "Would you like to help?" And I said, "Yes, I really would." But this is what I tell people when people come in, say yes, and try something. So I think the first time in Guatemala I sold ads for the program, but then we took part in the theater group, and before you knew it I was trying out for plays. One of the high points of that period, I guess, performing in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the National Theater in Guatemala, which was an amphitheater, an outdoor amphitheater, and it was a major big production, and I was Puck. That's a long time ago, but it was real fun.

Then we moved on to another post, and started a theater group there, my husband directed, we painted slats and built them in our back yard, and we got people to come over and help with that. It was really a community project, something for everyone. The person who didn't want to act, didn't want to do anything in front of the public, but was great at carpentry. We had a lot of fun doing that.

And then we went on, and one of the plays we actually presented I think in three different countries, *Barefoot in the Park*. It was a movie, it was a Neil Simon stage play. We did it in one country and then we were transferred and we said, we know how to do this, let's get a group together.

I think ultimately we presented that three times in three different countries. I think most Foreign Service people have a couple of things that they've just had a wonderful time doing. Some people it's trekking, or collecting things. For us it has been theater.

Q: It reminds me of a comment somebody said in Alaska, I think it was some guy who wanted to be a disk jockey and was never able to do it, but there in Alaska nobody else would, and there he was.

MINUTILLO: I think the best advice, if anyone asks, and people have when I talk to them, particularly to new officer groups, "Look, go out and have a good time. This is a chance for you to try some things that you wouldn't have time to try if you were living and working in Washington all your life." And the other thing is that the communities really need it. We need each other, so you can have an awfully good time doing this.

Q: There's also probably activities like that that break down the barriers between officers, and spouses, and other dependents.

MINUTILLO: Yes. I remember in Guatemala ... again, this is our first post, and the newest kids on the block, and I remember working behind the scenes on one of the plays, and there was the DCM who was in Our Town, and at that time I thought the DCM was really way up there, but here he was coming to rehearsals like everyone else, and having a good time. And you're right, it's a great leveler.

Q: Very, very interesting. Did you in your personal experience ever encounter the difficulties dealing with officers because you were a spouse when you were at various posts ... not being treated nicely.

MINUTILLO: No, I can't say that I did really. I didn't have any of that kind of problem. Nor did I really have situations in which I felt like I was being told that I had to do things. I liked all of our overseas experiences. But I always did a lot of things in the community. Besides theater I think of the other high points for me was working on a literacy program with a local group in Latin America, literacy in Spanish. So I joined that group and I became trained in how to teach reading and writing to adults who were working in the psychiatric hospitals. So it was a very difficult environment, but I felt it was a contribution. I think those are the kinds of things that become significant. I just hope people continue to do what they want to do, enjoy it, and do a little giving at the same time.

Q: That's what it sounds like. Just get up and do something.

MINUTILLO: And you can. You really can.

Q: Thank you so much, Maryann. It's been a pleasure to talk to you. I learned a lot, and a lot about the office as well, and also your personal views on a lot of things with the Foreign Service, and the experience of communities. We appreciate this and I know that the Oral History will benefit for a long, long time from this interview.

MINUTILLO: Thank you. I just think it's a wonderful opportunity to be able to talk all this time, and have someone care to listen. I really do appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Robert N. Minutillo

Spouse Entered Service: 1967Left Service:1988You Became Affiliated with Service: 1967Left Service: -

Relationship to Foreign Service: Spouse of Retiree

Spouse's Position: Public Affairs Officer, USIA

Place and Date of birth: Leominster, Massachusetts; December 15th

Maiden Name: Celli

Parents (name, profession):

Johanna & John Celli - privately owned business

Date and Place of Marriage: Massachusetts -1964

Children:

Roberto

Education:

BA, Emmanuel College, Boston, Massachusetts

MA, Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts.

Additional Graduate Courses at various American universities abroad (University of Arkansas in La Paz, Bolivia; University of California in Manama, Bahrain)

Doctoral Studies, Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts

Volunteer and Paid Positions Held

A. At Post:

Professional: Faculty member University of San Carlos, worked on development of a masters degree program for Guatemalan teachers of English; taught linguistics and American literature. Presenter in the annual Training Conference for Guatemalan teachers of English.

HondurasVolunteer: President of PTA of Colegio Sampedrano Americano; Vice President of International Women's Club; Founding member of San Pedro Sula Community Theater

ArgentinaProfessional: Featured speaker in Cultural and Anthropological Conference on Central America

BoliviaVolunteer: Featured speaker - Women in Literature Service; Organizer: American Bicentennial Celebration; Board member, producer, actress - La Paz Theater Group; Program Chair - La Paz Women's Club; Den leader - Cub Scouts

Professional: Developed pilot project for multi-level, multi-national, self-contained classrooms focused on mainstreaming within 6 months a group of children aged 6-12. American Cooperative School of La Paz. Taught Journalism, American Literature and British Literature to high school students - American Cooperative School of La Paz.

BahrainVolunteer: Leader and founding member of the community-action group which resulted in the establishment of the University of Maryland University College as an on-site American university program in Manama. Committee member for the first ever "Special Olympics" for Bahrainis and other residents of the country.

Professional:Member of the Faculty - English Department during the first year of operation of the University College of Bahrain. Faculty and staff member of the College of Health Sciences responsible for liaison with World Health Organization, UNICEF and other international organizations. Coordinator of staff and faculty in-service training and instructor in the teacher Training Program. I was joint project manager for a special grant.

ParaguayVolunteer: Las Amigas (American Women's Club)

Professional: Consultant - American School for teacher in-service training. Consultant to Instituto Paraguayo-Americano for teacher training. Community Liaison Officer

Washington, DCVolunteer: Church programs; Founder and Board Member, Foreign Service Youth Foundation

Professional: Teacher of multi-media and English in Montgomery County Public Schools.Instructor - American Literature and English at Immaculata Junior College. Consultant to Foreign Service Institute for Development of Human Side of Crisis Management Project. Education Counselor, Family Liaison Office. Director, Family Liaison Office

Honors:Department of State Group Superior Honor Award in recognition of outstanding performance during the crisis in the Middle East.

End of interview